

7 March 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. McCone

SUBJECT : CIA Responses to your cables from

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1. On September 7, you wired General Carter as follows:

"Urge repeat missions of recent reconnaissance operations which Gilpatric advises informative. Also I support use of R-101 if necessary. My hunch is that we face prospect of Soviet short range surface-to-surface missiles of portable type in Cuba which could command important targets of southeast United States and possibly Latin American Caribbean areas. You might suggest to Rusk that we develop joint policies for action in Cuba with selected Caribbean, South American states as an alternative to seeking unanimous OAS action which most certainly will be an ineffective compromise solution if past history is any indicator."

No specific response was made to you but General Carter did inform Secretary Rusk in accordance with your suggestion and Rusk said he was most appreciative.

2. On September 10, you wired General Carter as follows:

"Difficult for me to rationalize extensive costly defenses being established in Cuba as such extreme costly measures to accomplish security and secrecy not consistent with other policies such as refugees, legal travel, etc. Appears to me quote possible measures now being taken are for purpose of insuring secrecy of some offensive capability such as MRBMs to be installed by Soviets after present phase completed and country secured from overflights. Suggest BNE study motives behind these defensive measures which even seem to exceed those provided most satellites."

In our daily intelligence cable to you on 11 September, we included the following item in response to the above:

"Ref your request that BNE examine implications of defense equipment. Following is preliminary BNE statement: Whole question Soviet motivations, including possible reasons why Soviets might consider installation MRBMs being examined in SNIE being drafted for USIB next week. BNE still persuaded that costly crash operation to install SA-2s is more reasonably explained by other than desire to hide later buildup and that Soviets likely to regard advantages of major offensive buildup not equal to dangers of U.S. intervention. Cuba leaking like sieve from ground observation alone. This sudden crackdown on refugee flow and legal travel could be strong indicator of possible desire to undertake further military buildup in secret."

3. On 13 September, you cabled as follows:

"I continue to be concerned that the establishment of defensive equipment installations is merely a prelude to the location of an offensive weapon capability and once this is done the implementation of our policy as reported in the press might be extremely difficult and involve unacceptable dangers. I would like to talk with you on KY-9 from Norstad's headquarters to the White House or Pentagon Situation Room tonight. "

You and General Carter did talk on the KY-9 circuit that evening. There was no specific response sent by cable to you in Nice.

4. On 16 September, you cabled as follows:

(1) "Following August meeting principals when we first reported Soviet Cuban buildup, I suggested BNE study economic prospects of Cuba assuming Soviet technical assistance and guidance could correct present mismanagement of industry and agriculture by Castro organization. I then felt and stated that Soviets would reason that proper management could build Cuba into a viable economy with sufficient export of agricultural and manufactured product and other natural resources to cover needs for import and provide some excess for social betterment. In view of very extensive press comment on deterioration of Cuban economy leaving impression situation can never be reversed and possibility of such reasoning influencing U.S. policy importantly. I believe the study proposed will be revealing and useful. "

(2) "Also believe we must carefully study the prospect of secret importation and placement of several Soviet MRBMs which could not be detected by us if Cuban defenses deny overflight. In reflecting on my observations [redacted]

[redacted] I can envisage a Soviet plan to package missile, control and operating equipment in such a way that a unit could be made operational a few hours after a site cleared and a modest concrete pad poured. Do not wish to be overly alarm ing this matter, but believe CIA and community must keep government informed of danger of a surprise and also that detection of preparatory steps possibly beyond our capability once Cuban defense system operative. "

(3) Thrust of press reports reaching me is that there exists a clear demarcation between defensive and offensive preparations and I question if we can be sure of this. I recognize Cuban policy decisions most delicate and beyond Agency or my competence. However, believe we must give those making decision our best estimate of possible developments and alternative situations which might evolve and unexpectedly confront us."

(4) We responded to this cable on 18 September as follows:

(a)" No doubt that Cuban economic resources capable of substantial development given better management and sufficient capital investment. SNIE 85-3, before USIB tomorrow, recognizes this as a probable Soviet intention and that the objective is to stimulate Communist political action elsewhere in Latin America. As noted in 85-2 (1 Aug)., however, present state of Cuban economy is very bad and substantial upturn will be delayed until after 1963."

(b) "SNIE 85-3 discusses in detail possibility of introduction of MRBMs into Cuba, but judges this to be unlikely because of risk of U. S. intervention involved unless there is a radical change in Soviet policy not presently indicated. Such a change would have implications extending far beyond Cuba. We know from our briefings that Government top level realizes possibility of developments shielded from our detection once SA-2s operative. SNIE 85-3 stresses that there is a middle ground in which defensive or offensive character of buildup is a matter of interpretation. Various alternatives explored. Again we know ambiguities of offensive-defensive distinction brought to top level attention before public statements formulated."

(5) On 19 February, following the USIB meeting that day, we cabled you the conclusions of the SNIE which had been approved by USIB. In response, you cabled on 20 September as follows:

"Suggest most careful consideration to conclusion last sentence paragraph d. (This discussed possibility of missile or submarine bases in Cuba and in particular sentence you queried was:

"It would indicate a far greater willingness to increase the level of risk in U. S. - Soviet relations than the Soviet Union has displayed thus far and consequently would have important policy implications with respect to other areas and other problems in East-West relations.")

"As an alternative I can see that an offensive Soviet Cuban base will provide Soviets with most important and effective trading position in connection with all other critical areas and hence they might take an unexpected risk in order to establish such a position."

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H. Knoche

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